

10/7/76

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Curtain of Secrecy Still Hides Oswald's Trip to Mexico City

Los Angeles Times Service

WASHINGTON — Although it has declassified virtually its entire file on Lee Harvey Oswald, the CIA continues to maintain a curtain of secrecy over the accused assassin's trip to Mexico less than two months before President John F. Kennedy was killed.

Many of the deletions in the 2,400 censored pages released last week under the Freedom of Information Act relate to Oswald's activities in Mexico City between Sept. 26 and Oct. 3, 1963.

FOR INSTANCE, a copy of a biographical sketch prepared by the CIA two weeks after the Nov. 22, 1963, Kennedy assassination is far more interesting for what it conceals than for what it reveals.

The 15-page document covers Oswald's life from birth to burial with no apparent deletions except for the events that occurred on Sept. 27, 28 and Oct. 1, 1963. These events were removed completely from the document.

The same biographical study was made public earlier this year but the entire page dealing with the events was left out.

The Warren Commission, which concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin, said Oswald visited both the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Mexico City during his stay in the Mexican capital.

THE CIA revealed later that Oswald probably contacted Valeriy V. Kostikov, a KGB agent who was operating under cover as a Soviet diplomat. The CIA said Kostikov was attached to the KGB department that handled kidnappings, assassinations and similar acts of political terror.

Critics of the Warren Commission have long raised questions about Oswald's Mexico trip. Some critics contend that an importer used Oswald's name at the Soviet and Cuban embassies, possibly as part of some as yet undisclosed conspiracy.

The imposter theory was fueled by a series of previously released CIA cables which indicate the agency incorrectly identified as Oswald a man who apparently visited the Soviet embassy at about the time Oswald was thought to have been there.



Lee Harvey Oswald

...activities deleted

himself as Oswald and assumed that a photograph taken by a hidden camera about the same time

was of the same man.

It may be that the reason for the CIA's continuing secrecy about the Oswald trip is the agency's reluctance, even 13 years after the event, to admit that it had bugged the Soviet embassy. But the agency's reluctance to reveal the total record on the incident leaves two important questions unanswered: Did the man who was photographed also identify himself as Oswald? And, if so, why?

Thomas Mann, then U.S. ambassador to Mexico, attempted to launch an investigation of Oswald's activities in Mexico City following the assassination. But the State Department ordered him to call off the probe.

THE CIA released the text of a cable first cited in a report earlier this year by the Senate Intelligence Committee warning that Mann was "pushing this case too hard."

A CIA CABLE dated Oct. 10, 1963, and made public as part of the Warren Commission's report related that on Oct. 1 "a reliable and sensitive source in Mexico reported that an American male, who identified himself as Lee Oswald, contacted the Soviet embassy in Mexico City, inquiring whether the embassy had received any news concerning a telegram which had been sent to Washington." The cable described the man as "approximately 35 years old, with an athletic build, about six feet tall with a receding hairline."

Oswald was then 23 years old, 5 feet 10 inches tall and slender.

After the Kennedy assassination, according to the Warren report, the CIA sent to the FBI photographs of the man the agency apparently had mistaken for Oswald. The photo clearly shows a man about 35 years of age, about 6 feet tall with an athletic build and receding hairline. It certainly is not Oswald.

LAST YEAR, in response to a Freedom of Information Act proceeding, the CIA released to private assassination investigators Bernard Fensterwald and George O'Toole several photographs indicating that the same man had been

photographed at least twice.

Photographs released with the latest batch of documents add to the speculation about possible imposters. In addition to the previously released photos, there are several new ones. In all, 11 photos were released showing the man in three different sets of casual clothing, indicating he was photographed by the CIA and identified as Oswald on at least three separate occasions.

It seems likely that the CIA's source was a combination of hidden cameras and electronic eavesdropping devices.

IT IS POSSIBLE, of course, that the agency overheard someone on a hidden microphone identifying